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THE FRENCH CORN LAWS DURING THE PERIOD OF LOCAL CONTROL, 1515-1660.¹

THE early history of the French Corn Laws has evoked not a little discussion since the Physiocrats attributed to Sully the "invention" of the free-trade policy, but the discussion has not resulted in any careful study of this early period. The work of our chief authority, Dr. A. Araskhianantz, is superficial.² He has done little more than read the royal edicts, and even these are negligently treated, for he has omitted passages which would have seriously modified his view of the corn policy.³ He has, for example, failed to mention important provisions in the edicts of 1535 (February 20) and June 20, 1539.⁴ He has, furthermore, neglected completely the work of the local officials, who were really in control of the corn trade, despite attempts on the part of the crown to secure the power it had long claimed. We must, therefore, devote our attention first to the local policy.

The opportunism, the adaptation to the immediate conditions, which characterizes the policy of the local officials, makes generalization difficult; and the difficulty is enhanced by the fact that the regulation of the corn trade was controlled by many groups of officials, possessing co-ordinate jurisdiction, and scattered over a large territory without any hierarchical organization to give their action unity of purpose. Under these circumstances the first step in the examination of the corn policy of the sixteenth century must be a consideration of the local officials and their relation to each other in this branch of the adminis-

¹The present paper gives the results, in some respects possibly provisional, of a study of the French Corn Laws which will ultimately cover the period from 1515 to the outbreak of the Revolution.

²*Die französische Getreidehandelspolitik*, Leipzig, 1882.

³*Op. cit.*, pp. 73, 74. Cf. text of edict of 1601 in Delamare, *Traité de la Police*, ii. p. 932.

⁴Delamare, *op. cit.*, ii. pp. 918, 922. Cf. Araskhianantz, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

tration. We may then consider the problem with which they had to deal and the means they adopted for its solution.

The Local Officials.

In general, there were three sets of officials who might take action in economic matters within local areas. One set of officials had about as much right to act as any other set, and their relations were consequently very complicated. They fall roughly into three groups,—those of the municipalities, of the baillages, or sénéchaussées, and of the provinces.

In the case of the baillage and the sénéchaussée the difference in name is of no importance in the period which we are considering, merely indicating the early history of that particular area.¹ With four exceptions (Anjou, Maine, Boulonais, and Ponthieu) sénéchaussées are found only south of the Loire, baillages are most common in the north, but there were several in the south.² The baillage or sénéchaussée was not a solid block of territory, but a group of villages and towns connected in administration with some central town. Continuity of territory was broken up by the possessions of feudatories; and, although there was generally an endeavor to place all royal jurisdictions within a certain area under the same bailli, it was by no means essential.

The most important administrative areas within our period are the baillages or sénéchaussées and the provinces. The towns, which were so conspicuous from the twelfth

¹ The baillages were districts in which the administrative corps was established by the king; the sénéchaussées, districts in which the administrative system was originally established by some feudal magnate who administered his estate through a sénéchal, as did the kings of the tenth and eleventh centuries. The royal sénéchal, however, had become a national officer by the growth of the royal domain and of the royal power. This extension of royal influence made it necessary to create the bailli to take charge of the royal domain. But on feudal estates the sénéchal remained what he had been from the beginning, the supervisor of local administration. When the additions were made to the royal domain in the thirteenth century and later, the feudal sénéchaux retained their old title, though their functions were not different from those of the bailli. Molinier, in *Histoire Générale de Languedoc*, vii. p. 490; Viollet, *Histoire des Institutions*, iii. pp. 258, 259.

² See map No. 1 in Dupont-Ferrier, *Officiers Royaux des Baillages et Sénéchaussées*.

to the fourteenth centuries, remained of importance only in the few cases where they were able to resist royal aggression. Some changes were taking place in the baillages and the provinces with the increased importance of conciliar bodies and the addition of subordinate officials. But this change did not greatly affect the corn trade. The activity of the old officials remained for the most part the dominating factor. The question as to the authority responsible for the regulation of the corn trade was determined mainly by the administrative history of the locality. In some municipalities it was the town officials in whom this power was vested; in the baillages or sénéchaussées the bailli or the sénéchal, or their lieutenants, or, occasionally, the "Conseil du Baillage" or "Sénéchaussée," or, in some places, the "Etats de la Sénéchaussée"; in the province the governor or his lieutenant, or the Parlement.

In and around Paris the control of the corn trade, exercised by the chief municipal officer, the Provost of Merchants, for a time in question,¹ was in 1528 definitely confirmed by the king. The *Registres du Bureau*² mention the occasional intervention of the Parlement, either supplementing or directing his action.³ But he continued to be the most active and influential official.⁴

¹*Reg. du Bureau*, i. pp. 148, 150, 272, and Delamare, *Traité de la Police*, ii. pp. 918, 1002. The whole story is told in the record of June 26, 1528. *Reg. du Bureau*, ii. p. 28.

²*Registres des Délibérations du Bureau de la Ville de Paris*, 8 vols. (1499-1586), Paris, 1883-96. This is the most important collection of local material for this subject, containing the records of the Echevinage, and throwing light on the conditions throughout the upper basin of the Seine, whence came the corn supply of Paris.

³January 16, 1532, Parlement summons the Provost of Merchants, and demands an explanation of his refusal to grant an export permit to the Sisters of Poissy, who desire to carry corn from their farms for the maintenance of their abbey. The Provost of Merchants issues the permit ordered by the Parlement. *Reg. du Bureau*, ii. p. 140. Examples of the direct action of the Parlement are not rare. An arrêt of August 23, 1565, gives all persons permission to buy corn in the towns and villages of the vicinity and even in Châlons, Château-Thierry, Meaux; but their corn must be sold in the market at Paris. Delamare, ii. p. 1007. An arrêt of December 22, 1565, orders a domiciliary visitation in Paris to take stock of all corn within the city. *Ibid.*, ii. p. 1008. There were also several arrêts in 1566: *Reg. du Bureau*, v. p. 564, note.

⁴It is unnecessary to cite all the cases, as the fact is attested by the recognition of the king,—May 15, 1563, letter of the king to the Provost of Merchants, asking him to see that no obstacle is put in the way of the export of corn to Normandy

In Champagne and Picardy all the officials take part in the regulation of the corn trade, but here the balance of power falls to the governors.¹ The evidence of the work of the baillis of the region is very scanty. There is only one clear reference to such action,² though appeals of one kind or another are made from time to time. But, since our evidence is drawn solely from the Parisian records, it would not be safe to generalize as to the inactivity of the baillis.

In Languedoc the details of the situation are different, but the general facts are the same. There were several official circles, almost completely independent of each other, all possessing practically complete legal powers; but in practice authority was exercised mainly by the "Etats Généraux" of the province and the "Etats des Sénéchaussées." The Etats Généraux included not only the officials of the province, but also the great feudal lords and members of the third estate. Technically, they should have had merely consultative power, but in regard to the corn trade they seem to have been accustomed to act regularly upon their own initiative and without reference to other sources of authority. Louis XII. issued an edict, September 22, 1501, in which he ordered the "Etats Généraux" to obtain the assent of the Etats des Sénéchaussées before prohibiting or permitting the export of corn.³ Despite

from the stores collected at Paris for the royal army, (*Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 221-223), and by the recognition of the Parlement,—October 5, 1565, at a meeting of the Parlement, the Provost recites what he has done to secure the city against famine, his work is recommended, and he is urged to continue. *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 230, 231.

¹Texts of the prohibition of corn export from the province by the governor of Champagne in August, 1529, (*Reg. du Bureau*, ii. p. 59), by the governor of Picardy, August 31, 1530 (*Ibid.* ii. p. 75); references to similar prohibitions in 1531 and 1556 (*Ibid.*, ii. p. 133, iv. p. 457). In 1573 an appeal is made to the governor of Picardy urging him to secure freedom of export which is being hindered by the people. Delamare, ii. p. 1009. In 1587 the king is asked to send letters to the governor of Champagne ordering him to permit exportation. *Ibid.*, ii. p. 1011.

²Delamare, ii. p. 918.

³Vaissette, *Hist. Gén. de Languedoc*, xi. p. 168, note. See also a rather ambiguous quittance of the sénéchal of Carcassonne (August 15, 1499), acknowledging the receipt of 30 liv. 6 sous 6 den. "pour nous aucunement récompenser du temps et frays par nous mis au moys d'aoust derrenier passé, pour avoir assemblé les estatx de ladicte sénéchaucée à cause de la prohibition et traicte des blez que à cause de ce a esté serrée, et ladicte prohibition a esté faite." *Ibid.*, xii. p. 311.

this regulation subordinating the competence of the Etats Généraux, we nevertheless find later instances of their independent action.¹ But at times the estates contented themselves with asking the king to prohibit the export of corn.² In December, 1523, the sénéchal of Carcassonne issued a prohibition of the export of corn,³ but this is the only case I have seen of action by sénéchaux. The lieutenant governor, Clermont-Lodève, was also engaged in regulating the corn trade. On November 22, 1527, he prevented export temporarily. Meanwhile he had an elaborate inquiry made into the supply of corn, sending the result to the king, that he might take the proper action.⁴ A letter of his to the governor of Languedoc (Montmorency), written a month later, indicates that he had much to do with the enforcement of the prohibitions; and we find him issuing special permits to export corn.⁵ Lastly, the Parlement of Toulouse might interfere. In 1543-44, during a famine in the sénéchaussées of Toulouse, Carcassonne, Armagnac, and Quercy, the Parlement authorized special taxes, fixed the price of corn, and prohibited export. But its action was resented by the estates of

¹ In 1508 estates held at Narbonne in January refused to permit the export of a consignment of corn for the Queen of Aragon. *Hist. Gén. de Languedoc*, xi. p. 185. In 1528 Clermont-Lodève, the energetic lieutenant governor, writes to the king (March 29) that he has received the letter ordering him to permit the export of corn by the agents of the Grand Master of Rhodes and by the Commander of Trinquette. He reports that he induced the estates lately held at Montpellier to permit the export of 1,200 setiers for the Grand Master, though no further exports would be permitted except upon an order from the king or the governor. *Ibid.*, xii. p. 451. In the fall of that year the estates renew in more vigorous form the prohibition of the export of corn. They also recommend that the sénéchaussées aid each other with corn according to their ability. *Ibid.*, xii. p. 462.

² May 11, 1527. *Ibid.*, xii. p. 418.

³ December 29, 1523 . . . "fait inhibition et deffense aux gens des états dudut pays illec presens qu'ils n'ayent à vendre ne à transporter hors de la ville de Narbonne les vivres qu'ils ont appourté ou fait appourter au dit Narbonne pour la deffense dudit pays, jusques à ce que par luy ou aultres ayant charge du Roy en soit autrement ordonné." . . . *Ibid.*, xii. p. 389. But the situation was urgent, and there would not have been time to call the Etats.

⁴ *Hist. Gén. de Languedoc*, xii. p. 439.

⁵ 24 December, 1527. *Ibid.*, xii. p. 440. We have indirect evidence of a prohibition in his letter of October 4, 1526: . . . "à cause de . . . l'esterilité et cherté qu'est ceste année en ce pais, à la requeste des sindicz et autres gens d'icelluy, à mon retour de la court je manday faire déffense de n'en (*i.e.*, blés) estre aucunement tiré." *Ibid.*, xii. p. 405.

Languedoc.¹ Generally, however, the regulations of the Parlement were purely local, confined to Toulouse itself.²

I have little material from other sections of the country,³ but the principal features of the administrative system in respect to the corn trade are sufficiently clear. There are two points to be borne in mind: the officials in all cases had a wide sphere of competence; furthermore, the division of jurisdiction between the various groups of officials was not based upon any legislative provisions, but solely upon the historical development in each section.

The Economic Area.

The supremacy of the local officials in the administrative system would have been at once an incongruity and an evil, had it not signified that the local area was really the constitutional and economic unit. In a certain crude sense there was a French nation, but it was an idea rather than an actuality. The executive that came in contact with the people in every-day life was not the central government, acting through its agents,⁴ but the semi-independent official. The significance of the locality as an administrative unit we have already seen in our consideration of the local officials. We must now consider briefly the economic aspects of the local area.

The economic unity of an area, whatever its size, is denoted primarily by the presence of free competition between its parts, so that there is one price for the more im-

¹ Dubédut, *Hist. du Parl. de Toulouse*, i. p. 200. See, also, *Hist. Gén. de Languedoc*, xiv. pp. 30, 31.

² *Ibid.*, xii. p. 979; Dubédut, *op. cit.*, i. pp. 99, 157.

³ Scattered references from Rouen; Dupont-Ferrier, *Off. Royaux*, 300; *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 520, 521; Delamare, ii. p. 1015.

⁴ This was due in part to the ignorance of the royal ordinances, which Dupont-Ferrier mentions: "The ordinances were comparatively unknown, not only to the people, but even to the officers of the baillage. Collections of ordinances were rare. The Parlements themselves did not possess a complete set, much less the courts of the baillage or provosts" (p. 273). But the authority of the bailli was sufficiently extensive to enable him to do without the royal ordinances, as the Parlement of Paris said in 1499 "n'y a si petit juge royal qui ne puisse faire ordonnance en sa province, pro bono rei publicæ" (cited in Dupont-Ferrier, p. 274).

portant articles of consumption.¹ Now, as the characteristic of this area is the prevalence of a single price within the district, some idea of the size of the area in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may be gained from the local prices. Statistics are naturally scanty and the accuracy of what we have is problematical. Their value is further impaired by the numerous standards of weights and measures, by the deliberate depreciations of the coinage, and by the change in the purchasing power of money. But, though they give no basis for exact conclusions, they may be used with caution as illustrative material.

The most convenient local statistics for this period are the corn prices given by D'Avenel. There are considerable gaps in these figures, and the method of compiling averages is not beyond criticism. Furthermore, the averages are for provinces, though we cannot be sure that the economic area was really coextensive with the province. But for our immediate purposes the statistics are sufficient evidence of the wide differences of price prevailing in the various sections,—differences which cannot be satisfactorily explained by the cost of transportation, as the provinces were not supplied from some central market, but were for the most part self-sufficing.²

¹ A consideration of prices and conditions in all branches of trade would doubtless reveal much diversity in the extent of the economic area, as thus defined, for different commodities or groups of commodities. The whole question is one of much complexity and difficulty, and any statements must be at best but tentative, even when confined, as here, to the corn trade alone.

² D'Avenel, *Hist. Econ. des Denrées, Salaires, etc.*, ii. pp. 896, 897. The figures give the price of "blé" in modern francs per hectolitre.

	<i>Bretagne, Poitou.</i>	<i>Orléannais</i>	<i>Champagne.</i>	<i>Dauphiné.</i>	<i>Provence, Venaissin.</i>	<i>Isle de France.</i>
1501-25	—	6.94	—	2.51	4.82	3.80
1526-50	16.00	6.76	—	21.15	4.50	4.79
1551-75	23.69	11.32	—	14.09	—	11.09
1576-1600 . . .	16.47	15.44	28.95	18.41	33.67	19.31
1601-25	—	8.73	12.20	22.40	20.00	12.05
1626-50	7.30	9.30	14.85	29.94	19.80	16.65

	<i>Picardie, Artois.</i>	<i>Normandie.</i>	<i>Angoumois, Aunis, Saintonge.</i>	<i>Berri, Limousin.</i>	<i>Alsace.</i>	<i>Langue- doc.</i>
1501-25	—	1.68	—	3.86	3.63	5.19
1526-50	—	2.23	1.77	3.81	6.65	8.57
1551-75	12.00	5.38	23.99	21.90	12.08	16.68
1576-1600 . . .	—	6.78	51.35	28.00	13.40	30.93
1601-25	—	9.37	9.03	—	12.35	16.45
1626-50	14.99	11.31	11.66	3.60	22.00	20.95

Was there enough trade between any two sections to produce an equalization of price? There was undoubtedly an active corn trade between Paris and the provinces of Picardy and Champagne. Despite an unfortunate lack of figures, the statistics for this region appear to indicate that differences in price were less considerable in this group of provinces than in any other. Yet, even here, it would be hazardous to say that these provinces formed a single trade area. Elsewhere the comparison is more striking. There is apparently no connection between prices in Normandy and in the Isle de France, though the two provinces are connected by the Seine. Brittany and Poitou have no connection with either Normandy or Isle de France. The price level in Orléannais is entirely different from any of the price levels found on the Seine. The same wide divergences are to be found in the south and the east, as may be seen by a comparison of prices in Languedoc, Provence, and Dauphiny. The provincial prices of oats, rye, and barley bear out the same conclusions.¹

These general statistics suggest the narrow boundaries of the economic unit, but they give us no clear indication of the actual extent of this elusive area. Some statements might tempt us to conclude that the area was in reality co-extensive with the provinces. Thus Clermont-Lodève writes to Montmorenci, the governor of Languedoc, that corn is one-third cheaper in Provence than in Languedoc.² An even more interesting indication is the attempt to fix prices for a province. An unsuccessful undertaking of this kind was that of 1521-22 in Normandy.³ Reasons for regarding the province as the economic area might also

¹ D'Avenel, *Hist. Econ.*, ii. pp. 906-911.

² October, 1526. *Hist. Gén. de Languedoc*, xii. p. 405.

³ The Parlement set the price at fifty sous per muid of grain, but the peasants ceased to bring corn into Rouen, and the proclamation was evaded by offering a gratuity in addition to the fifty sous. *Deux Chroniques de Rouen*, pp. 124, 125. The action is not to be taken too seriously, as the local authorities acted often more effectively than the provincial. See, for instance in this case, the elaborate proclamation of prices of the États of the baillage of Rouen. *Archives Sommaires de Rouen*, pp. 124, 125. Prices were also frequently regulated by the municipal authorities. *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 173, 174; *Deux Chroniques*, p. 133.

be found in the provincial prohibitions¹ and the constant reference to the various provinces in discussions of corn scarcities at Paris and in Rouen.² But statements made at times of more or less general failure of harvests do not definitely fix the normal size of the economic area. The market town was the actual centre of competition, and the area usually dependent on the market town might justly be considered as the true economic area. The markets of Paris, including the outlying, subsidiary markets,³ were certainly the largest economic area in France; and, though it is difficult to speak with certainty, I think this area would be included by a circle drawn around Paris as centre with a radius of twenty-five or thirty leagues.⁴ The river trade from more distant sections falls in a different category, for the two sources of supply are clearly distinguished in the contemporary material, not only in regard to the Parisian trade, but in other sections. The nature of this external trade is indicated by the contemporary surprise that municipal interference is not necessary to secure the supplies of Paris.⁵ In Rouen, and doubtless elsewhere, the municipal authorities were obliged to act whenever supplies were needed from outside the market area. In short, the need for this trade had become sufficiently regular at Paris to lead to the organized effort of the "Marchands Forains," though in other places this trade, which we may term international in its nature, not being regularly necessary, was less efficiently organized, and consequently needed a larger measure of control.

¹ See above, p. 455.

² Delamare, ii. pp. 1016-1020; *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 517, ff.

³ For a list of the subsidiary markets, see Delamare, ii. pp. 715 and 1013.

⁴ The league was equivalent to two or three miles.

⁵ "Est à noter que Paris s'entretient sans aucune provision (i.e., of the authorities), ains simplement par le ministère des marchands, ou plutot regrattiers, qui vont acheter quantité de marchandises et denrées, qu'ils viennent debiter, pour du prix du debit en aller acheter d'autres. . . . Et neantmoins, en cas de nécessité on pourrait, en quinze jours ou trois semaines, faire venir le plupart des voires ci-dessus des environs, vingt à trente lieues à le ronde, y employant par ordre public tous les chevaux et harnais, . . . particulièrement en ce qui concerne les blés, desquels on pourrait faire grande provision en peu de jours, en envoyant, par commandement du Roi, des échevins amont et aval la rivière . . . ainsi qu'il fut fait es années 1539 et 1568." *Mémoire des Commissaires au Châtelet de Paris*, 1637. *Mémoires des Intendants sur les Généralités*, Paris, p. 659.

The relative importance of the domestic and foreign corn trade at Paris—if we may use these terms—is quite accurately stated in a part of the report of the commissioners of 1637, just cited. They say that 1,600 muids of corn were needed each week,¹ and they also tell us just where this quantity came from. “About 450 muids of corn arrive each week, by river, from divers parts of Picardy, Brie, and Champagne, and at the public markets, by land route, from parts called France, Mulcian, Beauce, and Vexin in Normandy. . . . Another part of the 1,600 muids arrives at the markets, and is brought there as bread by the bakers of Gonesse, Pontoise, St. Denis, Poissy, Argenteuil, Corbeil, Charenton, and other places *in the vicinity of Paris*. This part amounts to about 800 muids of corn, which the said bakers buy at markets within eight or ten leagues of Paris, as, for instance, at Dammarten, Senlis, Pontoise, Montlhery, Chateaufort, Chevereuse, and other places. The rest of the 1,600 muids, amounting to 350 muids, is consumed by the religious houses and communities of the said town, who obtain the corn from their farms, or make their purchases outside the markets of Paris.”²

The report of this commission is substantially in harmony with the evidence of the *Registres du Bureau*, which also shows a considerable movement of corn from the central market at Paris to the towns in the vicinity.³ Evidently, one price was beginning to prevail, and corn was evenly distributed, throughout the thirty-league circle. But the unwillingness at first of the Parisian officials to recognize this movement suggests that at the beginning of the sixteenth century it was a recent development. There is an added reason for thinking this to be the case, since the external trade, which the report of 1637 declares independent of municipal encouragement, was during the sixteenth century

¹ The muid was equivalent to 51.2 bushels. An elaborate account of the old weights and measures may be found in Delamare, ii. p. 744. For the modern conversion I have followed D'Avenel, *Hist. Econ.*, ii. pp. 485, ff.

² *Mémoires des Intendants sur les Généralités*, Paris, p. 657.

³ *Reg. du Bureau*, i. p. 92 (August 9, 1504); i. p. 148 (February 23, 1508); i. p. 150 (March 23, 1508); ii. p. 54 (April 8, 1529); v. p. 234 (June 25, 1563).

not always sufficiently well organized by the merchants to stand alone. In the dearth of 1546 the municipal authorities were about to intervene, when the bakers agreed to take all responsibility for the maintenance of the city, if they were given the letters patent they desired. Their proposition was accepted, and Paris was furnished with corn till the next harvest.¹ This incident probably means that the fears of the municipal authorities were premature, and that the bakers were able to meet the crisis, for the most part, with "domestic supplies." Municipal purchases were probably made occasionally, though we have evidence of little more than the intention.² At times the municipal authorities endeavored to secure the complete utilization of the domestic supply, ordering (December, 1565) the inhabitants to procure supplies for at least four months and, if possible, for five or six months.³ It is clear that the main reliance was placed on the domestic supply; and, if energetic measures were taken, this supply could at times become almost entirely adequate. But, with the growth of population, the external trade was gradually being organized to cover the increasing deficiency.⁴

The area dependent upon the central market was nowhere so large as at Paris, and the trade outside the area did not attain elsewhere such complete organization.⁵ At Rouen the area was probably comprised within a circuit of ten leagues from the town, though the river towns were intimately connected with the Rouen market, even when somewhat further from the town.⁶ But the supplies in the area

¹ Delamare, ii. pp. 1004, 905.

² *Ibid.*, vii. p. 333; Delamare, ii. pp. 1011, 1020; *Reg. de l'Hôtel de Ville*, i. p. 398; ii. p. 421.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. pp. 1008, 1009 (includes a case in 1573). See also *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 145, 198, 546, note.

⁴ Evidence of the activity of municipal authorities during the Fronde, when trade was somewhat disorganized, is to be found in the *Registres de l'Hôtel de Ville pendant la Fronde* (1846-47-48), i. pp. 55, 83, 104, 165, 176, 179, 289.

⁵ Puy en Velay furnishes an instance of a very small market area. Cf. *Mémoires de Jean Burel*, pp. 158, 163, 181, 207, 383, and index under "blé." See especially pp. 29 and 441.

⁶ This limit is suggested by a passage in the *Archives* which notes with surprise the presence of persons at the market who have come seven or eight leagues, *Archives Sommaires*, p. 140.

were not always adequate, and we find the municipal authorities not infrequently buying corn at a distance and selling it below cost.¹ Occasionally, large numbers of poor flocked in from the surrounding country. At such times the poor were employed upon public works, and fed on regular rations from the municipal granaries.²

The smallness of the economic area here emphasized was not due merely to the absence of adequate means of communication. It would, indeed, be more accurate to say that the limitation of the economic area was the chief impediment to improvement in facilities for communication. But, as a matter of fact, there was considerable trade during this period which seems to have found highways without much difficulty. Attempts were made to improve the roads and water routes. The posts and relays, established in the early part of the period, became increasingly important.³ The wider trade, "international" in its relation to the economic organization of the various small trading areas, and of slow but steady growth, called into existence a new class of middlemen, to which we must now turn our attention.

The Middlemen.

Mere retail corn-dealers in the towns can be traced back to an early period, but the middlemen, who begin to become prominent in the sixteenth century, especially in the corn trade between Champagne, Picardy, and Paris, are an entirely different class of dealers. They did what we should call to-day a wholesale business, and, furthermore, they represent modern tendencies in their attitude towards the guilds. Unlike the retail dealers of the towns, the middlemen of the sixteenth century avoided the restraints of guild organization. The operations of some of these middlemen

¹ *Deux Chroniques de Rouen*, pp. 124, 125, 133; *Archives Sommaires de Rouen*, pp. 210, 211, 140, 209.

² *Comptes Rendus des Echevins de Rouen*, 1409-1701, i. pp. 25, 39, 67, 71, 77, 85, 103, 111, 122, 133, 145, 156, 159, 179, 192, 208, 221; ii. pp. 30, 51, 76, 77, 78, *Archives Sommaires*, p. 227.

³ *Traité de la Voirie*, pp. 555-559, 597-600.

in times of scarcity were of considerable magnitude. In 1531, for instance, François Daubray agreed to import from abroad and deliver in Paris 1,000 muids of corn at the price of 70 sous tournois per setier.¹ In 1565 certain Parisian merchants agreed to venture 100,000 francs to bring corn from foreign countries, taking on themselves all maritime risks, on condition of being given a strong escort at the expense of the town from Havre-de-Grâce to Paris.²

The attitude of the government towards this class of capitalist merchants was fortunately not oppressive. The first general ordinance on this subject is that of February 4, 1567, which provided for the gratuitous licensing and registration of corn-dealers. "Such persons shall bring their corn to the public market of the town once a month at the least, unless ordered to do so more frequently. They shall have constantly a quantity of corn at their disposal, and shall declare the places where they purchase and collect corn under pain of confiscation and fine."³ This ordinance was re-enacted, without change, by Henry III., November 27, 1577. The main provisions are also embodied in the ordinance of Louis XIII., January, 1629, which adds the registration of the location of granaries.⁴ But, though the middleman was thus tolerated, he did not escape criticism. An arrêt of the Parlement de Paris (August 23, 1565) attributes the high prices to the operations of "malicious merchants and regraters."⁵ Bodin mentions the operations of middlemen as a cause of high prices.⁶ The author of the "Discours sur l'Extrême Cherté" also alludes to them,⁷ and references of this sort are by no means uncommon.⁷ But, despite the feeling that the middleman took

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, ii. p. 132; v. p. 519.

² *Ibid.*, v. pp. 520, 521. See also *Archives Sommaires de Rouen*, 1565, p. 209. For similar dealings, though without distinct mention of the amount of corn each proposed to import, see also above p. 463, note 2.

³ Delamare, ii. p. 710.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 1007.

⁵ Fournier, *Var. Hist. et Litt.*, vii. p. 146, note.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vii. pp. 146, 147.

⁷ Delamare, ii. p. 1013. The preface of an "Ordonnance de Police" (Paris) of October 6, 1632, is particularly interesting, as it suggests a sort of conspiracy, and as it involves in the charge the particular class of the middlemen we are studying. *Ibid.*, ii. p. 658.

an improper advantage of his situation, there is no evidence of any desire to prohibit such trading. The middleman was accepted as a necessary evil, to be controlled by regulations for the public benefit. It was hoped that the formation of the granaries, which the middlemen were legally required to keep filled, would do much to prevent the sudden shortages, which caused so much distress.¹ The registration of the location of the granary facilitated collection of the forced contributions at times levied on merchants. The information required as to sources of supply made the intervention of the municipal authorities more efficacious in times of scarcity.

But recognized abuses were to be checked. Purchase of the peasant's standing crop, as well as other forms of forestalling, were prohibited.² A merchant was allowed by the regulations to have a granary in his own town, but merchants bringing corn down the river to Paris were not ordinarily allowed to hold it after arrival for a more favorable market. Thus the edicts of 1576 and 1577 forbade the middlemen not registered at Paris to store corn, except with special permission, granted only for the drying of wet corn or in time of scarcity. Under ordinary circumstances the merchant must sell his corn at the first or second market held after his arrival; and, once the price declared, he may not increase it.³ It was still a general principle that it was better to have corn sold by the producer to the consumer, if his distance from the market did not make it impossible. The

¹ But this hope was not always fulfilled, as may be inferred from a bit of evidence from Paris (1637): "Est à noter qu'en toute la Ville de Paris il n'y a au plus que vingt personnes faisant trafic et marchandise de blé, lesquelles n'ont les facultés hors l'un d'iceux de pouvoir faire achat pour plus de 20 ou 28,000 ff de blé à une seule fois; de sorte qu'ils ne font leur achats qu'au fur et à mesure qu'ils font le debit de leurs marchandises. Et ainsi se peut dire qu'en cas de nécessité, il ne se pourrait espérer desdits marchands aucuns secours, n'ayant aucuns magasins de reserve; et de fait à present ils n'ont fait achat tous ensemble que de la quantité de 3,200 muids de blé." *Mémoires des Intendants sur les Généralités*, Paris, p. 675. Such accumulations must be carefully distinguished from the attempts to make corners, which were always prohibited; but it must be admitted that any accumulations were jealously watched, despite such complaints as this.

² Prohibitions against the purchase of standing corn, in any way, were issued in July, 1482, November, 1544, November, 1577. The last of these edicts also contained a clause against going out to meet the corn. Delamare, ii. pp. 712, 713.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 726.

corn merchant was recognized as a necessary agent for the distant trade; he was debarred from the local area. The middlemen "shall make their purchases at a distance, without preventing the corn of the surrounding sections from being brought to the public markets" (1567¹ and 1577). Nor was this merely a pious wish. The distance was defined as two leagues from all towns except Paris, and there the middlemen could not purchase within eight leagues of the town. Technically, the prohibition applied only to the town in which the merchant lived; but at Paris, at least, the prohibition seems to have been enforced generally. The limit at Paris was later extended to ten leagues, to exclude the merchants from a number of markets just outside the eight-league line, where they had held up all the corn from the neighborhood.²

The adaptation to circumstances, which is the essence of the general corn policy in this period of local control, is equally characteristic of the regulation of the middlemen.

The Corn Problem of the Sixteenth Century.

The activity of the corn merchants, necessary in the consuming centres, had a different effect upon the producing centres, if we may apply such a large term to those sections which exported their small surplus. The trade to supply the great towns developed faster than agricultural production and technique, so that there was constant pressure upon the areas which had any exportable surplus to take more from them than was really justified by their crops. Dread of shortage imposed protective measures, therefore, upon the authorities in both sections. Such was the problem developed in these small economic areas by the introduction of the middleman. In the end, through the natural working of the law of supply and demand, the situation would be met by private individuals with no greater inducement than the hope of legitimate gain. But an automatic organi-

¹ Delamare, ii. p. 709.

² The difficulty had become notorious by 1620; in 1622 the limit was extended; edict confirmed in 1630, 1632, 1672. *Ibid.*, ii. pp. 715, 716; i. p. 122.

zation of trade was slow in growth, and in the mean time some adjustment must be effected. The middleman of the sixteenth century was intent primarily on his home market. He purchased where and as he could, and hastened away with his corn, regardless of conditions in the producing district.

A good illustration of the problem is given by the troubles of Paris in the fall of 1565. In August corn became very scarce, the price finally reaching eleven livres per setier (August 12).¹ The municipal authorities were alarmed, and despatched officials to Beauce, Pluviers, Gâtinais, Brie, and Champagne to publish an arrêt of the Parlement of Paris and an ordinance of the town. Letters were also sent to the governors of Champagne and Burgundy, asking them to send corn to Paris, and to allow corn to pass through their jurisdictions.² This arrêt of August 23 declares that all the trouble is due to the malicious merchants and regraters, but, nevertheless, encourages dealing in corn. Permission to purchase corn is given to all persons in the towns and villages of the vicinity, and even to inhabitants of more distant towns near the branches of the Seine. All persons availing themselves of this privilege must bring their corn to the Parisian market.³ These measures stimulated imports, and by August 28 reduced the price to forty sous tournois per setier.⁴ The relief, however, was but temporary, for in September we find the city authorities again anxious. On the 10th H. Simon, after visiting a number of places in Champagne and Brie, reported to the Parisian officials that harvests had been light in the upper Seine basin. At a conference with the officials the next day the corn merchants of Paris declared that, owing to rains in Brie and Champagne and hot weather elsewhere, there was no hope of obtaining corn from the usual sources of supply. In Picardy and Santerre not enough corn had been gathered

¹ Eleven livres per setier, using D'Avenel's reduction, is roughly equivalent to \$1.30 per bushel, about double the usual price of the time.

² *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 515, 516.

³ Delamare, ii. p. 1007.

⁴ *Reg. du Bureau*, v. p. 516.

to sow the next crop. The merchants advised purchases in Auvergne, Brittany, and Guyenne, and in Holland, Amsterdam, and Dantzic.¹ But letters from the king somewhat later show that the corn merchants knew nothing of the conditions in Guyenne and Brittany, for the harvests were particularly poor in those provinces.² At an unusually well-attended meeting of officials on the 14th most of the time was spent in discussing the means of getting corn from abroad. But, when the "lieutenant civil" declared that from recent personal observation he knew that in Champagne there were large quantities of corn to be had of the châteaux, seigneuries, and of some towns, it was decided that the risks of importing corn from Dantzic were too great, and that it was better to deal with the king's subjects. An inquiry should be made to discover what quantity of corn there was in the city. All citizens should then be ordered to procure sufficient corn to supply their own wants for the next six months, drawing their supplies from places outside Paris. Furthermore, the king should be asked to order all provincial and town officials to make an exact statement of the corn to be found in their jurisdictions, and then, after retaining what was needed for home consumption, to permit the export of the rest to Paris.³

Here we have all the elements in the situation: pressure in the consuming area, leading to heavy exports from the agricultural sections immediately after the harvest; the distress in the producing sections caused by this premature export;⁴ the function of the officials in making estimates of consumption and seeking to secure a proper distribution of the supply. From the statements of the merchants that they could get no more corn in Champagne and Brie, and the

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 517, 518.

² *Ibid.*, v. p. 523.

³ *Ibid.*, v. pp. 519, 520.

⁴ A similar case in Rouen in April, 1573, illustrates a slightly different phase of unwise export. April 28, 1573, "Sur l'avertissement que a reçu Mgr. de Cerrouges, qu'il y a Commissaires députés pour rechercher quels bleds et grains il y a en ce pays affin d'en enlever et faire porter à la Rochelle. Le blé vaut maintenant, à Rouen de 9 à 10 liv. le mine. Il n'y en a pas pour la sustentation des habitants." May 13, "Commission donnée par la ville à Pierre Laillet Sr. de St. Clair pour aller acheter des bleds en Picardie pour la sustentation du peuple." May 28, corn begins to arrive. *Archives Sommaires de Rouen*, pp. 226, 227. See also pp. 94, 95, 100.

report of the lieutenant civil that there was plenty of corn in the châteaux, we may infer that the middlemen dealt almost exclusively with the small farmers, who were unable to hold the crop for any length of time. But we have direct evidence in the prohibition of the governor of Champagne (August, 1529): . . . "All merchants and other persons are hereby expressly ordered to purchase no corn in rural sections, to make no hoard except to supply the needs of their households, and then only with corn purchased in the open market. All peasants are forbidden to sell any corn to the aforesaid merchants under pain of confiscation." Notaries are forbidden to draw up contracts for such sales under pain of removal from office, and all sales and purchases already made are cancelled.¹ The result of the dealings of the middlemen with the peasants was often disastrous to the latter. A short crop and the usual expenses started debts which accumulated until the ruin of the peasant was complete.²

The Local Corn Trade Policy.

The work of rough calculation and adjustment of the corn supply fell, as we have seen, to the officials in each area; and their efforts to relieve the sectional pressure resulted in what we may call a local corn trade policy.³ But, as

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, ii. p. 59.

² "Discours sur l'Extrême Cherté," Fournier, *Var. Hist. et Litt.*, vii. pp. 170, 171. "Quant aux fermiers et marchands, on voit ordinairement que des que les bleds se recueillent, les marchands vont par pais et arrent et achètent tous les bleds et mesmement depuis quatre mois cela s'est veu, que les marchans ont enlevé, arré, et retenu tous les bleds et toutes les granges des champs." The sterile years, and the war of 1585 which sent soldiers throughout the kingdom, have ruined the peasant who has lived by borrowing on his crop. Each harvest turning out worse than the preceding one, the peasant becomes more and more deeply involved.

³ Both consuming and producing centres were not always within the political limits of France. Languedoc and Provence were what I have called producing areas, supplying parts of Spain. There were spasmodic exports from Normandy to foreign ports, so that Normandy might be called a producing centre supplying a foreign market, but, though the exports lead to much complaint and occasional violence, the term "producing centre" cannot be applied to Normandy without exaggeration. For exports to Spain from Languedoc see Fournier, *Var. Hist. et Litt.* ("Discours sur l'Extrême Cherté"), vii. p. 147, note, and p. 153. Both Spanish and northern trade, *Reg. du Bureau*, v. p. 491. For violence against persons exporting from Rouen see *Deux Chroniques de Rouen*, pp. 168, 169, and *Cahiers des Etats Gén. de Norm., Louis XIII. and XIV.*, ii. p. 396.

might be expected from the difference in interests between the producing and the consuming areas, two sides, frequently conflicting, of the local policy may be discerned. In the producing regions it was the aim of the local policy to retain all but the actual surplus of the crop. Here, therefore, the policy was, in the main, necessarily prohibitive, but it was equally necessary to permit the exportation of the surplus. The object of the prohibition was not to cut off all export, but to give the officials control over the trade by the grant of special permits. Such permits were regularly granted unless the local crop was very light, so that there would certainly be no surplus. Evidence from Languedoc in regard to these exceptions is given in a letter of Clermont-Lodève, already noticed.¹ In another letter, answering complaints from the court that he has not been sufficiently severe in enforcing prohibitions, he says: "I can assure you upon my honor that nothing has been exported this year, and it is a long time since any one holding my office has shown such severity as I have towards the merchants."² This apparently refers to the practice of licensed corn export under prohibition, and this interpretation is borne out by an order of the lieutenant governor, dated November 22, 1527. He speaks of the light crop and of the necessity of retaining all the corn within the province. "Notwithstanding this, some merchants and others, after collecting great quantities of corn, had exerted themselves to the utmost in order to obtain, by divers crafty methods, permission to export corn, which, if granted, would drain this country to the great prejudice of the inhabitants, who would be exposed to the danger of inadequate supplies."³ Here we have striking evidence of the need of local control; for, despite the short crop in Languedoc and the prohibition of export, the corn merchants were preparing heavy shipments for Spain, and doing all in their power to get the special permit required. They felt no

¹ See above, p. 456, note 1, *Hist. Gén. de Languedoc*, xii. p. 451. See also *Ibid.*, xii. p. 418.

² December 24, 1527. *Ibid.*, xii. p. 440.

³ *Hist. Gén. de Languedoc*, xii. p. 439.

responsibility for the situation in the province, and were ready to export corn as long as they could buy.

In the urban or consuming areas the corn policy assumed a dual aspect. Great attempts were made to get corn from other sections, then the usual means were adopted to hold the corn. The encouragement of imports did not often take the form of an actual bounty, though this was sometimes given.¹ At times the cost of transportation was paid.² The encouragement was more frequently given in the form of letters from the king to guarantee the merchant against interference from local officials.³ Most interesting are the measures taken by the Parisian officials to protect merchants from violence and robbery at the hands of the inhabitants of the smaller towns on the upper waters of the Seine. February 27, 1501, a large meeting was held at the *Chambre des Comptes* to consider action against the inhabitants of villages near Pont l'Évêque, who had attacked the corn merchants coming to Paris, killing some, capturing others, and seizing their corn, and who had also placed obstructions in the river to prevent navigation. The *Parlement* was asked to grant a commission to one of its councillors to go with one of the *échevins* to the scene of disturbance, and, after informing themselves as to the facts, to proceed against the persons and property of the malefactors.⁴ In April, 1521, merchants were stopped at the river towns by force, and their corn seized or released only after they paid a heavy ransom. Energetic redress was again taken. In the dearth of 1565 the *Parlement* ordered all officials within its jurisdiction to use legal process against any persons placing any impediments in the way of transportation.⁵ This protection of the middlemen from popular violence, supplemented by the royal letters of protection

¹ September 13 and 19, 1565, sixty sous tournois per muid were offered as a bounty to foreign (i.e., provincial) or Parisian merchants bringing corn from Languedoc, Guyenne, or other provinces. *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 519, 521. See *Archives Sommaires de Rouen*, pp. 124, 125, for a similar bounty in 1522.

² *Reg. du Bureau*, v. p. 221; *Ibid.*, i. p. 54. ³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 132; v. p. 521.

⁴ Delamare, ii. p. 1002. See, also, *Reg. de l'Hôtel de Ville*, ii. p. 414.

⁵ *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 548, 549.

against local officials, was a very practical form of encouragement.

But, once the authorities had lured corn within their jurisdiction, they adopted the prohibitive policy which we have found in the purely agricultural sections; that is, prohibitive with exceptions. Thus, in March, 1508, the merchants of Paris made great efforts to obtain permits to export corn. Their importunity finally succeeded, and the Provost of Merchants granted the desired permission,¹ but only on condition that they placed on sale at Paris as much corn as they sent up or down the river. Then, again, a short period of liberality would often make it necessary to enforce the prohibitions more rigorously. In April, 1536, there were heavy exports of corn by the water route to Rouen and other parts of Normandy. The merchants of Normandy were collecting such quantities of corn near Rouen that the price was lower there than in Paris. After consultation the Parisian authorities decided to cancel all permits that had been granted previously.² Somewhat later (June 30) they resolved to grant no more general permits.³ This seems to be a case of interference with through traffic, and there is considerable justification in this interpretation, since the Provost of Merchants was recognized as having such authority.⁴ The same policy appears in Rouen.⁵

The conflict of interests as between producing and consuming areas induced direct appeal to the king. In 1531 the governors of Champagne and Picardy had stopped corn that merchants were preparing to export to Paris. The supplies in Paris were already low, and prices were high. As the authorities felt that there was no hope of obtaining corn elsewhere, they applied to the king, as well as to the governors of Champagne and Picardy.⁶ In the distress of 1565 it was again to the king that the authori-

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, i. p. 150.

² *Ibid.*, ii. p. 218.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 225.

⁴ See p. 454, note 4, and p. 481.

⁵ For the prohibitive policy at Rouen see *Archives Sommaires de Rouen*, pp. 91, 103, 133, 140; *Comptes Rendus des Echevins*, ii. pp. 77, 78.

⁶ *Reg. du Bureau*, ii. p. 133.

ties turned, asking for orders that all local officials should make an exact enumeration of the corn in their jurisdictions, and send to Paris whatever was not needed locally.¹ But this sort of arbitration was of minor importance, and did not necessarily signify that the time had come for royal control and the complete subordination of the local official.

Relief was also sought in the prohibition of export of corn from France as a whole. The exports of corn from France were apparently not large,² and were only an occasional source of danger; but, even though only a matter of small margins, the authorities were agreed that exports from the kingdom should on occasion be prevented. Though theoretically the king was supposed to protect his subjects against injudicious export,³ the authority of the local officials was recognized in 1528, when the king ordered that "the Provost of Merchants and the échevins . . . should have power to grant permits for the export of corn on condition of securing from those given the permits good bail that they would not transport the corn outside of the kingdom."⁴ The order purports to confirm existing customs, so that it seems probable that the responsibility for checking foreign export rested upon the local officials. This hypothesis receives considerable support from the common practice of requiring with special permits the return

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 519, 520.

² It has often been said that France was a great exporter of corn in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but there is no adequate foundation for this assertion. D'Avenel makes a very strong statement for the reigns of Louis XIII. and XIV., but he does not give any evidence to support his views. *Hist. Econ.*, iii. p. 213. Furthermore, we have a distinct contemporary statement to the contrary in resolutions passed by the merchants and bourgeois of Paris (February 12, 1565): . . . "parceque il ne sort dudit royaume aucuns bleds ordinairement, sinon de quatre ou cinq années l'une, qui est quand il plaist à Dieu donner grande abondance de bledz en ce royaume, et que lors il y a charté et grande faulte de bledz en Espagne et Portugal . . . et qu'il ne sort point de bledz hors de ce royaume pour mener en Angleterre, pais de Flandres et autres pais, sinon que quelque fois en quatre ou cinq ans, comme diet est, en Espagne et Portugal, charté de bledz audiet pais." *Reg. du Bureau*, v. p. 491. One can infer from the local material that these conditions remained unchanged, though it is not easy to get a definite statement.

³ The royal tradition upon this matter was ancient. Philip IV. was particularly active. See *Ordonnances des Rois*, i. pp. 351, 381, 420, 425, 426.

⁴ *Reg. du Bureau*, ii. p. 28.

within a given time of a voucher from the market specified by the exporter. In January, 1505, for instance, commissioners arrived in Paris from the region of Auxerrais, Lionnais, Bourbonnais, seeking corn to make good the deficiency caused by their short crops. The Parisian officials decided to give them aid; but, deeming it unwise to let them go themselves to the sources of Parisian supplies, the Parisian merchants were sent to the upper Seine basin to buy the corn and bring it to Paris. There it was sold to the strangers, who were required to report to the Provost of Merchants when the corn had been sold in the markets to which they had been allowed to carry it.¹ We have a more detailed statement of the custom March 24, 1528, when a merchant from Rouen is allowed to export 100 muids of corn to Rouen "upon giving security that he would not export more than the amount agreed upon, and that within six weeks he would duly certify that the corn had been sold at the markets of Rouen."²

But this policy of prohibition of foreign export could not easily be carried out by the local officials. At the seaports, of course, they could act effectively. In 1497, when prices had risen, the officers of the baillage of Rouen unloaded the corn from several foreign-bound vessels, fearing lest they would sail during the night.³ Local authorities in the interior, however, were handicapped. In 1501 the Paris officials feared a corn shortage because of the heavy demands made on the Parisian supply by the river towns, Melun, Corbeil, Etampes, and others. The movement of corn up the Seine was not stopped; but all merchants coming down the Marne, and desiring to carry corn up to the river towns, were obliged to sell one-half of their corn at Paris. Then, to secure the interests of all, so far as might be, in order to prevent the exhaustion of Sentois and Beauvoisis, it was decided that exports to foreign parts down the river Somme should be prohibited. But here difficulty arose. The Parisian officials were powerless outside their limited

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, i. pp. 99, 100.

² *Ibid.*, ii. pp. 16, 17.

³ Dupont-Ferrier, *Officiers Royaux*, p. 300.

jurisdiction. All that could be done was to have the Parlement send instructions against foreign export to the bailli of Amiens and the sénéchal of Ponthieu.¹ Now, if the bailli of Amiens and the sénéchal of Ponthieu did not comply, there was no remedy: meanwhile the corn would be safely on its way to foreign parts. Furthermore, suppose merchants with permits for export to some town near the frontier decided that they could obtain better prices in foreign parts, who was to stop them? They were generally required to bring back certificates of the sale; but, if they did not do so, the officials could do little more than impose fines. The corn was already beyond recovery.

The Royal Policy and the Conflict with the Local Officials.

1515-1589.

Under such circumstances the local officials came to recognize the advisability of royal action. They always had regarded the crown as supreme authority, but they had not expected much active royal interference. By the middle of the sixteenth century, however, we find them welcoming the royal prohibitions of foreign export, for in 1566 the municipal authorities at Paris agreed that it was advisable for the king to prohibit the export of corn to foreign parts.² But they did not agree to anything more than this. The crown at that time was planning to establish commissioners and clerks in all important seaport towns, to prevent the exportation of corn. The authorities declared this unwise, because there was not enough trade to keep such clerks busy. This criticism brings out the attitude of the officials towards royal measures. They admitted theoretically the propriety of royal action; but, as the king frequently desired what was, in their view, impractical and inexpedient,³ they conceived it to be their duty, in the public interest, to interpret, or even alter, the royal ordinances.

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, i. pp. 53, 54.

² *Ibid.*, v. p. 491. (February 12, 1565-66.)

³ Dupont-Ferrier, *Officiers Royaux*, 274; *Ordonnances des Rois*, xiv. p. 513; Isambert, xii. p. 509 (Art. 26).

This solicitude of the local officials to save the king from himself appears sincere, on the whole; but in practice it resulted in an independence of action which to us seems rank insubordination. Accordingly, the policy of the crown conceived under these conditions consisted in part of ideal schemes, impossible of execution, and in part of practical measures which were enforced because they met the views of the local authorities. But the crown was not content to discharge the purely subordinate function which the local authorities considered proper. It was a period of financial pressure, and each king hoped to fill his treasury by means of the corn duties. Consequently there was a struggle on the part of the crown to assert its rights and to reduce the local officials to a subordinate place. But though the local resistance was based upon a perhaps genuine solicitude for the interests of the crown, it was none the less a real and inevitable conflict. The inertia and traditional independence of the local officials had to be overcome before a well-organized state could exist in France. The conflict with the baillis may be traced back to an earlier date, but it did not become important in this branch of administration until the latter part of the reign of Francis I.

The only instance of royal action between 1512 and 1535 is a temporary measure, in 1516, which recognizes and confirms the authority of the baillis. The king, fearing attack after his victory at Marignano, desired to provision his border fortresses. The harvest had been good, and the provost of Paris, the baillis of Chartres, Senlis, and Vermandois had granted export permits with great liberality. The king intervened to divert the corn surplus to his fortresses. But the letters patent of March 12, 1516, merely instruct the baillis to prohibit export: "We order and commission you, *each in his own right*, to issue and cause to be issued prohibitions in our name, . . . that henceforth no one shall export or carry from the aforesaid region any corn or grain; . . . and we give each one of you full power, authority, and special commission to do this."¹

¹ Delamare, ii. p. 918.

The authority of the local officials and the existing administrative system is in no way challenged by these letters patent. The governors of Champagne and Picardy issued prohibitions of export in their own name in 1528, 1529, and 1531.¹ The authority of the Provost of Merchants (Paris) in 1528 is without restriction upon his full discretion.² This is also the period covered by the material from Languedoc, which clearly shows that the Etats exercised an independent control of the corn trade.³ In 1526 the action of the local officials of Rouen was approved by that guardian of royal interests, the Procureur du Roy.⁴ The local officials had practically complete control of the corn trade between 1512 and 1535.

But the royal attempts to subordinate the local officials, which had already become notable in other branches of administration, were now extended to the corn trade. The letters patent of 1535 open the conflict with an emphatic declaration of the freedom of the interprovincial and the foreign trade. "We have given and granted by these presents . . . permission to all merchants and other persons of our kingdom to carry, transport, purchase, and export corn from such parts of our kingdom, lands, and domain as they see fit, whether the corn is designed for their private use, or to be sold for gain to persons of our said kingdom or to strangers."⁵ This declaration, however, applied only to the *gouvernement de l'Isle de France*. The preamble might lead one to suppose that the edict was intended to be purely temporary, but this is not confirmed by the attitude of the king in 1539. The action of the Parisian officials at this juncture is particularly significant. Alarmed by heavy exports to Normandy in the spring of 1536, made in pursuance of the royal letters patent, they first pro-

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, ii. pp. 59, 75, 133, 134.

² *Ibid.*, ii. p. 28.

³ See above, pp. 455, 456.

⁴ February 21, 1526. "Touchant l'arrêt de certains bledz trouvez enfoncez dedans des pouchons estans en ung navire sur les cays, que l'on vouloit porter hors du pays.' Le Procureur du Roy, après avoir oui le rapport du procureur de la ville et des Etats, declare que l'arrêt avoit été bien fait." *Archives Sommaires de Rouen*, p. 133.

⁵ Delamare, ii. p. 918.

hibited all exports not authorized by special permits obtained from the Provost of Merchants (April 27), and finally declared that no more general permits would be granted (June 30).¹ No better illustration of the relation between the crown and the officials could be desired. The royal edict was recognized by the officials, and observed for a while; but, as it soon became clear that it was inexpedient, the officials did not hesitate to act upon their own authority to prevent the evil consequences.

The first attempt of the crown to secure control of the corn trade had failed; and the edict of June 20, 1539, which renews the contest, admits the failure of the preceding edict, and seeks to avoid the danger of ambiguity, which had opened the way for local interference. Accordingly, we have a restatement of the liberal principle, particularly as applied to interprovincial trade, in an edict which was declared to be perpetual, and which expressly prohibited the interference of the local officials. Upon payment of the usual customs, dealers in corn and other merchandise were "permitted to export and carry from the kingdom, and to transport from place to place within the kingdom, . . . without being obliged to secure from governors, lieutenants, baillis, and sénéchaux any letters of export, permits, or licenses."² In August the king ordered the justices to make reports upon the price of corn and the quantity within their jurisdictions.³ Evidently, an attempt was to be made to make the royal control effective.

¹ Deliberation of Provost of Merchants and the Echevins of Paris, April 27, 1536. *Reg. du Bureau*, ii. p. 218. See also p. 225.

² Delamare, ii. p. 922. The text of this edict is obscure, and seems to have misled Araskhiantz, who interprets the edict as permitting interprovincial trade only. Delamare refers to the edict as permitting foreign trade also. Araskhiantz failed to read the principal clause with sufficient care. It runs "permis à toutes personnes nos Sujets . . . de tirer et enlever, mener et ramener en et auedans de nostre Royaume." Here "tirer et enlever" cover the foreign trade, and "mener et ramener en et auedans de nostre Royaume" the interprovincial trade. The words "tirer et enlever" and "mener" are used in these meanings in the ordinance of February 4, 1557. Fontanon, *Ordonnances des Rois*, i. pp. 763, 764.

³ "In all courts of our ordinary jurisdictions, reports shall be made each week of the value and ordinary estimate of the crops of all sorts of important fruits, such as corn, vines, hay, and the like, by the merchants dealing in the said kinds of fruits. The merchants shall be obliged to do this without salary, by means of fines, prohibition of their trade, or imprisonment, or otherwise at the pleasure of the court." Isambert, xii. p. 621 (Art. 102).

But the "liberal" policy of Francis I. was abandoned almost as soon as conceived. Despite the perpetual edict of June 20, we find the king issuing letters patent on November 20, annulling his general export permissions, and forbidding export without special letters patent and payment of an écu per tonneau.¹ The prohibitive policy, however, met with little success, since, under cover of an exemption in favor of Piedmont, corn was exported without the special letters patent and without paying the new imposition. There was also some difficulty in applying the financial clause, as the tonneau varied widely in different parts of France.² The king finally decided that more money was to be made out of the regular dues paid when export was permitted; and May 27, 1540, in letters patent which lay much stress on the fine harvest, export is permitted to all countries, except Geneva, without paying the écu per tonneau.³ But this edict makes no general statement of policy. We cannot even be sure that it was meant to be anything more than a temporary measure designed to last till the next harvest.

These declarations of royal policy were not taken very seriously by the local officials. In 1543-44 the Parlement of Toulouse made extensive regulations for the commerce of Languedoc. Liberty of commerce was left only to the town of Toulouse.⁴ In 1556 the Parisian authorities complain of a prohibition by the governor of Picardy; but, though they decide to write to the king, there is no talk of an infringement of the royal edicts declaring the provincial trade free.⁵ The royal attempt had failed. The reign of Henry II. produced no notable corn laws. We have two edicts, one February 4, 1557,⁶ permitting the export of all classes of goods and merchandise except corn, and

¹ Delamare, ii. p. 920.

² *Ibid.*, ii. pp. 920, 921. The policy, it will be noted, was not to permit export free of duty, but merely to permit it under the usual dues. Prohibition was absolute except so far as special letters patent were issued.

³ Isambert, xii. pp. 674, 676.

⁴ Dubédat, *Histoire du Parlement de Toulouse*, i. p. 200.

⁵ *Reg. du Bureau*, iv. p. 457.

⁶ Fontanon, *Ordonnances des Rois*, i. p. 763.

the other, August 29, 1558,¹ permitting the export of corn to foreign parts for six months. But this second edict had very limited application, as its operation was restricted, not only in time, but to the jurisdiction of the Parlement of Paris.

The second attempt to secure control of the corn trade finds expression in the edict of Francis II., December 20, 1559. The death of the king a few months later put an end to this trial of strength with the local authorities. The edict is interesting, however, as it shows that the real problem was clearly realized. The mistake made by Francis I. had lain in trying to establish free trade (in the sixteenth-century meaning of the word) as a permanent policy. The alternations of good and bad harvests, the fact that there was frequently no surplus that could be safely exported,² all contributed to render it impossible to carry out any permanent policy of either permission or prohibition of export. Francis II. proposed to create a bureau of eight officials, sitting permanently at Paris, receiving the local reports and determining each year how much corn could be exported. The amount once fixed for the year, the bureau was empowered to grant special letters patent until the assigned limit was reached. As the preceding harvest had been good, the edict authorized the exportation of 50,000 tonneaux of corn that year.

Meanwhile the local authorities were regulating the corn trade with their customary independence. Under Henry II. and Francis II. they were not disturbed by declarations of the freedom of interprovincial trade. There is no change in the first few years of the reign of Charles IX. In May, 1561, the Provost of Merchants prohibited all exportation of corn from Paris, by land or water, under pain of confiscation of the corn and of the boats or wagons.³ In the late spring of 1563 there is the curious correspondence in which the king orders the Provost of Merchants not to interfere with the corn supply of the royal army in Normandy.

¹ Delamare, ii. pp. 923, 924.

² *Reg. du Bureau*, v. p. 491.

³ *Ibid.*, v. p. 93.

The boatmen bringing the corn from the upper Seine were protected by vouchers from the commissioner-general of the royal army, but in each case they were allowed to pass only after presentation of the vouchers¹ and the authorization of the Provost of Merchants.² Nor was this an empty form. We have an instance where a merchant was detained and allowed to proceed only after the personal interposition of the king and on condition of returning within six weeks a certificate that the corn had been sold at the royal camp.³ Although the royal orders were complied with in each case, the authority of the Provost of Merchants was clearly recognized.

But Charles IX. had no intention of allowing the local officials to continue in this course, and in 1564 he took his first step in a policy of royal aggression which is embodied in the series of edicts culminating in the great measure of June, 1571. The idea of permitting some regular export by special licenses, which had been expressed in the edict of 1559, is the basis of this third and last considerable effort of the crown to subordinate the local officials.

The edict of Avignon, September 25, 1564, is known to us only through the record of a meeting of the Parisian officials, February 12, 1565;⁴ but its main provisions can be easily inferred from the proceedings. There was an article prohibiting the export of corn, and a declaration was made of the dues payable when export was permitted by special letters patent only, and also when the permission was general. But the importance of the measure lay in its proposed creation of new officials to enforce the edict. A commissioner and a clerk were to be established in the chief ports, from which all exports must be made. These new officers were charged with the collection of dues and the enforcement of royal prohibitions.

The attitude of the Parisian officials is significant. The Provost of Merchants summoned the leading citizens to discuss the expediency of the measure. They agreed "that

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, v. pp. 221, 223.

² *Ibid.*, v. pp. 222, 224, 229.

³ *Ibid.*, v. p. 233.

⁴ *Ibid.*, v. pp. 490, 491.

it would be advisable to permit no exports of corn to foreign parts without the permission of the king," but they characterized the edict as impractical, and opposed the creation of new officials as a needless expense in view of the limited export of corn. The old practice of requiring certificates was, in their opinion, fully adequate.¹

The project of 1564 was not at once carried out, possibly because of the opposition of the local officials; and in the mean time there were one or two edicts designed to effect some temporary purpose or to reiterate the royal claims. Thus, in June, 1565, the inclement weather left little hope of a good harvest, so a general prohibition of export was issued.² But, despite the corn shortage in 1565,³ an attempt was again made to create elaborate machinery for the management of a corn trade that did not exist. This edict of February 16, 1566, is unfortunately lost; but the edict of June, 1571, indicates that it was practically a restatement of the plan embodied in the edict of 1564.⁴ The contest with the local officials was continued in the provisions of the general ordinance of 1567. Export to foreign ports without royal permission was absolutely prohibited, and the provincial trade was declared free.⁵

The edict of June, 1571, unites all phases of the projects of Charles IX. Beginning with a confession of the futility of former edicts, the king proceeds to declare his rights. "We declare that the power of granting permission to export corn to lands outside our kingdom is a royal and domainial right of our crown, which we intend to delegate to no one, and a breach of which shall be a crime of *lèse majesté*. We forbid all persons to ask for a grant of permission to export, or for a grant of dues arising from export. All

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, eod. loc.

² Delamare, ii. p. 959.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 1007, ff.; *Reg. du Bureau*, v. 515, 516, ff.

⁴ See edict of June, 1571. Delamare, ii. p. 927.

⁵ "The interprovincial corn trade shall be free to all, no one shall place any hindrance in the way of this trade, and it shall not be necessary to have permits from officers, governors, or captains of places, who shall not restrict the freedom of trade in any way whatsoever, unless authorized to do so by letters patent from the crown." Delamare, ii. p. 926.

judges and other officials are forbidden to take any account of such moneys, as we intend to apply them to the support of our army without having them enter into our treasury. No corn shall be exported without our permission, but this shall not be interpreted as a prohibition of the interprovincial trade, which shall continue as before.”¹ The edict then provides for the creation of elaborate machinery to determine the surplus which would properly be available for export each year, and for the disposal at auction of the right to export the quantity of corn thus fixed. The baillis and sénéchaux were to send commissions each August to the judges of their district, requiring them to obtain information concerning the corn crop from the officers of towns and villages. The reports of the baillis were to be supplemented by reports from the treasurers of the généralités, based upon information gathered on their regular circuits. From these two reports the amount of corn to be exported would be determined, and each généralité given the right to export a fixed quantity of this surplus. The baillis were then to publish a notice of the auction of the export licenses. Any person might compete, for any quantity from one tonneau up the whole amount assigned to that area. Bidding was to begin at three livres ten sous tournois per tonneau, and it was stated clearly that the rights acquired in this manner did not exempt the purchaser of the license from the obligation to pay the customs. The exportation of this corn was to take place only from certain designated ports, at each of which were a controller and one or more clerks. This staff of officials was in charge of a Contrôleur-général des Traités. The duties of these officials were purely clerical,—the registration of exports and the customs payable, together with the granting of certificates to persons exhibiting the proper licenses. They had none of the large discretionary powers which made the baillis so difficult to manage. The financial motive, which was the real incentive in these royal attempts, appears unmistakably in this

¹ Delamare, ii. p. 927.

edict. The king was endeavoring to stimulate exports in order to sell licenses. The policy was prohibitive only in appearance, for the prohibitions were for the most part made to be broken by special letters patent granted in a way which would have extended effective royal control far beyond its former limits.

Although this attack on the local officials was carefully conceived, and, so far as elasticity of adjustment was concerned, apparently adapted to the conditions of the time, it met the same fate as earlier schemes. The harvests failed before the new machinery had an opportunity to get fairly in motion. The edict was not registered by the Parlement until January, 1572. In that year crops were scanty,¹ and the failure of the harvests in 1573 compelled the king to abandon his undertaking. An edict of October 20, 1573, prohibited all exports of corn in the ensuing year, ordered irregular contracts for the purchase of corn to be cancelled, and gave the Provost of Merchants at Paris special authority to purchase corn in foreign countries or in distant provinces, such as Guyenne and Brittany.² Apparently, the king recognized the failure of his plans for the freedom of interprovincial trade, for otherwise this authorization to import from Brittany and Guyenne would be superfluous. At all events, the Parisian officials had already taken matters into their own hands, for as early as July 4, 1573, they had prohibited the export of corn from Paris.³ The harvests failed again in 1574, and the danger of exports called forth another edict prohibiting export for one year.⁴ The local officials remained in possession of the field.

The reign of Henry III. brings out no new aspects of royal policy, but his general edict of November, 1577, contained a restatement of the freedom of provincial trade. This probably secured no more attention than previous declarations, for in 1586 and 1587 we find the local authorities were acting independently. May 8, 1586, the Provost of Merchants prohibited all merchants from loading corn

¹ Delamare, ii. pp. 1008, 1009.

² *Ibid.*, ii. p. 960.

³ *Reg. du Bureau*, vii. p. 73.

⁴ Delamare, ii. p. 961.

on the Seine, Marne, and Oise, if it is to be transported to any place other than Paris.¹ In the following year the governor of Champagne was preventing export from his jurisdiction, and the Parisian officials asked that the king order him to permit export.² Curiously, there is not the least allusion to the royal declarations for freedom of inter-provincial trade, there is no assertion that the action of the governor of Champagne is illegal. In September the king prohibited the export of corn to foreign parts.³

The crown had failed conspicuously in its attempt to secure control of the corn trade. The local officials and the actual conditions of the time were fatal obstacles to the impractical financial schemes that had been proposed. But the kings had exercised some influence through use of the special permits, which are so severely criticised in the *Discours sur l'Extrême Cherté*.⁴ It is quite possible that the exports made under cover of these licenses were less injurious than this writer would have us believe, since they may have tended, in some measure, to mitigate the rigors of over-zealous local control.

The Corn Policy of Henry IV. and Sully.

The belief that Sully and Henry IV. were the originators of a free-trade policy was the work of the Physiocrats. A few passages in the *Economies Royales*, the high-sounding preamble of the edict of 1595, and the edict of 1601, fur-

¹ *Reg. du Bureau*, vii. p. 579.

² Delamare, ii. p. 1011.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 962.

⁴ The "Discours" mentions "la libéralité dont nos rois ont usé à donner les traites des bleds et des vins et autres marchandises pour les transporter hors du royaume; car les marchands, advertis de l'extrême cherté qui est ordinairement en Espagne et en Portugal et qui souvent advient aux autres lieux, obtiennent par le moyen des favoris de la cour, des traites pour y transporter les dits bleds, le transport desquels nous laisse la cherté." The permission of exportation is criticised severely in another passage of the same essay. "La paix avec l'étranger nous donne les traites et par conséquent la cherté, qui n'est pas si grande en temps de guerre, durant laquelle nous ne trafiquons point avec l'Espagnol, le Flamand et l'Anglois, et ne leur donnons ny bled ny vin et a c'est occasion il faut qu'ils nous demeurent et que nous les mangeons—en temps de guerre donc, que les traites sont interdites nous vivons à meilleur pris qu'en temps de paix. Toutefois, les traites nous sont nécessaires." Fournier, *Var. Hist. et Litt.*, vii. pp. 145, 148, 173.

nished the scanty materials from which the Physiocrats created a Sully in their own image.¹ The myth derived some added currency from the popularity of Henry IV., and the work of the lively imagination of the Physiocrats gained a firm foothold.

But our study of the preceding period shows that there is nothing new in the two edicts of Henry IV. The old principles are not even asserted with the earlier vigor. The edict of 1601 is far less liberal than the edicts of 1535 and 1539. There is no explicit declaration of the freedom of interprovincial trade, and the fine preamble extolling the value of the liberty of commerce is an abridgment of the preamble of an edict of Henry II., issued in 1557.² Furthermore, the hostility shown to the activity of the local officials is nowhere as determined as that of Charles IX. Even in other matters of agrarian policy there is little originality, since the edicts for the alleviation of the conditions of the peasantry were merely re-enactments of previous legislation.³ I do not mean to imply that no credit should be given Henry IV. for social reforms, but we must remember that many of his measures were based upon the traditions of sixteenth-century policy.

The edict of February 20, 1601, is the only "liberal" corn law of the reign of Henry IV., so that Sully's corn policy should here find its most complete expression. But, as a matter of fact, it is merely a measure to relieve export for the ensuing year of the additional dues that had been levied upon corn exported from the valleys of the Seine and Loire by virtue of special permits. These duties had been levied to enable the king to carry on his wars; and,

¹ Forbonnais thus contrasts Colbert and Sully: "Colbert, si intègre, si ami des peuples, suivit une fausse route, dans laquelle il se trouva enfin fort embarrassé. Sully, avec moins d'art, étoit parti d'un principe plus naturel et plus simple. La terre pensa-t-il est le dépôt des premières richesses, du nécessaire comme du superflu. C'est donc à multiplier ces richesses que consiste l'abondance de l'état. Pour animer leur multiplication, il faut que le commerce en ouvre les débouchés; sans liberté, point de commerce." Forbonnais, *Recherches sur les Finances*, i. p. 292.

² Delamare, ii. p. 962; Fontanon, *Ordonnances des Rois de France*, i. p. 763.

³ Delamare, ii. p. 677, ff. The best account of this work of Henry IV. is to be found in G. Fagniez, *Economie Sociale de la France sous Henri IV.*, Paris, 1897.

with the cessation of hostilities, they could be dispensed with.¹ The latter part of the edict indicates that special licenses had been issued to permit export under heavy dues from the northern provinces. Henry IV. was herein following the policy that had been pursued by all his sixteenth-century predecessors, of whose liberality the author of the *Discours sur l'Extrême Cherté* so bitterly complained. There is reason to believe, however, that Henry IV. carried out this policy in a somewhat different manner. His predecessors had dealt for the most part with individuals: Henry IV. dealt with provinces. This is suggested by a passage in the edict, but is more clearly shown by a letter of the king to Sully of October 11, 1598: "I am waiting to hear what M. d'Incarville will write me concerning the offers made for the permission to export corn and wine from Languedoc before I decide or make known my pleasure to you."² The local authorities, however, continued to act if an emergency arose. In 1604 the Parlement of Toulouse prohibited export of corn from Languedoc, despite the permission granted by the king.³ In 1608 the Parlement prohibited all trade with Bordeaux because the plague was raging there.⁴

The corn-trade policy of Sully and Henry IV. was the result, not of *doctrinaire* "free-trade" inspiration, but of financial pressure. The financial element in the policy is evident in the preamble of the edict of 1601, and strongly shown by its whole tenor. It is more naïvely confessed in the letter written by Sully when he heard of the prohibition issued by the Parlement of Toulouse. "For that reason," he complains, "the farmers of the customs say they will no longer pay the price of their farms, so that I fear that your fortresses and galleys will remain without funds; for I have no means of meeting the action of the Parlement, that resting wholly in your person."⁵

¹ Delamare, ii. p. 932.

² *Économies Royales* (Trois Vertus Couronnées), i. p. 396. See also *Ibid.*, ii. p. 271.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 271.

⁴ Dubédat, *Histoire du Parlement de Toulouse*, i. p. 679.

Furthermore, in considering the "liberality" of Henry IV., we must remember that prohibition was actually the rule in interprovincial as in foreign trade during the first part of the reign. No trade was regularly permitted among the great towns until 1593, though this was the result of the civil war, and not of royal action.¹ But even the relief granted by the king in 1593 showed more desire for money than for freedom of trade. Trade was permitted, but unusually heavy dues were levied at the gates of Paris. Notwithstanding these extraordinary impositions, "the Parisians did not cease to praise the truce . . . and the freedom of trade" that had been granted.² In 1595, however, a prohibitory edict was issued which does not contain a single limitation. Not even the interprovincial trade is explicitly exempted, though it is not explicitly included. There is nothing to indicate that it was limited in time, and it seems to have been the basis for the export licenses throughout the reign.³

Like the policy of Henry III., the policy of Henry IV. was prohibitive in its general form, though liberal in its effect because of the extensive use of licenses. But we find no marked struggle with the local officials during this reign. That difficulty was met by a new solution, less dramatic, but more effective. The royal activity apparently invaded the provinces separately, striking a blow at local power at its source.⁴ There are no more pompous declarations of royal superiority; but, though the local authorities were not deprived of any of their powers, the king exercised more actual control over the corn trade than had any of his predecessors.

Our space permits only a rapid survey of the period between the death of Henry IV. and the ministry of Colbert.

¹ "Estans privées de toute commerce entre ellesmesmes et avec estrangers, à cause des formels empeschemens qu'y mettaient les places qui tenait pour le Roy." *Œconomies Royales* (Trois Vertus Couronnées), i. p. 115.

² Palma Cayet, *Chronologie Novenaire*, iv. p. 471.

³ Delamare, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 962.

⁴ Note in this connection the dealings with the provinces indicated in the Edict of 1601. See also A. Poirson, *Hist. du Règne de Henri IV.*, ii. pp. 15, 16.

Other interests absorbed the attention of the central administration, so that there were no innovations in the corn-trade policy, and no systematic attempt was made to take authority from the hands of the local authorities. Despite the reiterated assertions of royal power,¹ the crown was unable to enforce its edicts, and was obliged to secure aid from the local officials. It is interesting to note that the local authorities were accustomed to make the royal edict a local measure by re-enacting it themselves. December 11, 1626, the Parlement of Paris issued an arrêt of this type.² Similar action was taken by the Parlement of Normandy in July, 1632,³ and by the Parlement of Toulouse in July, 1643.⁴ In a sense this is merely an executory act on the part of the Parlement; but the evidence indicates that the prohibition was enforced, not so much because the king had made it, but because the Parlement considered the prohibition expedient. If the crown's wishes coincided with the views of the local authorities, they were well carried out. This had always been the case; but, during this period, the royal and local views seem more often to coincide.

Nevertheless, the local authorities were still capable of asserting their independence, and the distress in the fall

¹ We must omit detailed consideration of the royal edicts of this period: they are, in any case, of minor importance. November 24, 1625, export prohibited because of deficient crops, Isambert, xvi. p. 153; January, 1629, export of corn and wine to be permitted only when the local officials report that the provinces are adequately supplied, Delamare, ii. p. 932, Isambert, xvi. p. 328; September 30, 1631, export of corn prohibited, provincial trade specifically exempted, Delamare, ii. p. 963; November 19, 1639, export of corn permitted upon paying the ancient customs, Isambert, xiv. p. 514; April 9, 1643, prohibition of export for one year, Delamare, ii. p. 963; October 2, 1643, prohibition of export, but provincial trade declared free, Delamare, ii. p. 964; September 4, 1649, prohibition of export, provincial trade declared free, Delamare, ii. p. 964.

² "Ce jour sur la plainte faite par le Procureur général du Roy, qu'au préjudice des Lettres dudit Seigneur du 26 May dernier, . . . plusieurs transports de bleds et légumes hors ce Royaume ont esté faits et que autres en font magazins qui causent une grande cherté de bled: . . . les officiers du Chastelet ouys et le Prévost des Marchands; la matière mise en délibération. Ladite Cour a fait très expresse inhibitions et deffenses à toutes personnes . . . de faire, au préjudice desdites Lettres Patentes, . . . transporter hors de ce Royaume les bleds, vins et légumes, n'y en faire magazin, à peine de vie." Delamare, ii. p. 1013.

³ *Comptes Rendus des Echevins de Rouen*, ii. pp. 77, 78. There is a definite statement here that the arrêt of the Parlement was strictly enforced by the échevins.

⁴ Vaissette, *Hist. Gén. de Languedoc*, xiv. pp. 30, 31.

of 1649 provoked determined action in defiance of royal orders. Paris had already suffered considerably in the spring and summer because of the civil disorders, and was therefore quickly reduced to extreme distress by the retention in the producing districts of the deficient crop of 1649. The price of corn reached twice its ordinary average.¹ The Provost of Merchants endeavored to stimulate imports as soon as the crop was harvested, consulting the corn merchants upon the situation.² The king issued the edict of September 4, 1649, prohibiting foreign export and declaring the provincial trade free.³ A few days later (September 9) the king ordered purchases of corn for Paris.⁴ Letters patent were also obtained from the Parlement of Paris, cancelling the prohibitions of all the local authorities.⁵ But all these measures were of no avail. The Parlement of Brittany prohibited all export from that province, and Rouen ordered all merchants to sell there one-third of the corn they exported from the town.⁶ Other places were equally recalcitrant. The échevins of Soissons replied (September 21) that they could send no corn to Paris as they themselves were in distress. Châlons-sur-Marne, likewise, reported distress due to inadequate supplies. The magistrates of Vitry had been able to collect corn for Paris, but the popular outcry forced them to retain the corn and prohibit all export.⁷ The Parisian merchants were again summoned to the Hôtel de Ville (October 7); and "they declare unanimously that the lack of corn is wholly due to the fact that it is impossible to export corn to Paris from any place whatsoever, there being no freedom of export from any town, because the officers and people will not permit export."⁸ But this statement applied only to the ordinary source of the Parisian supply. Corn was finally obtained from Toulouse⁷ and La Rochelle, Brittany, Holland, and Dantzic.⁸

¹ *Reg. de l'Hôtel de Ville*, ii. p. 422. Corn was even quoted at thirty-five livres per setier.

² *Ibid.*, ii. p. 413.

³ Delamare, ii. p. 964.

⁴ *Reg. de l'Hôtel de Ville*, ii. p. 411.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 416.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 418.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 419.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 423.

Yet, whatever powers were exercised by the local authorities during this period, the signs of a new order can be traced in the gradual development of a new administrative officer, the intendant, with discretionary powers designed to promote royal rather than local interests. The powers of the intendants were very general, and varied widely, but there is little evidence that they interfered as yet in the corn trade, though a letter of Henry IV. to the inhabitants of Lyons shows that some of the intendants might have interfered if they had seen fit.¹ This instrument of royal power was developed in judicial and financial administration, and lay ready at hand when Colbert assumed control.

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¹“Nous l’envoions doncques maintenant par delà pour en prendre soing, avec ample pouvoir d’aviser à ce qui sera des affaires d’Estat, despesches, *traictes* et police de toutes les villes du pays.” Hanotaux, *Origines des Intendants* (Preuves), p. 232.